

Reprints from the

International Trumpet Guild® Journal

to promote communications among trumpet players around the world and to improve the artistic level of performance, teaching, and literature associated with the trumpet

itg journal, jr.

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GOAL-SETTING FOR THE CREATIVE THINKERS

BY BECKI RONEN WALENZ

January 2014 • Page 57

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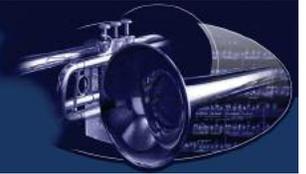
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GOAL-SETTING FOR THE CREATIVE THINKERS

BY BECKI RONEN WALENZ

It is easy for a musician to become overwhelmed with his or her own creativity and aspirations. Although this challenge is not necessarily a bad thing, it is important to realize that without setting distinct goals for oneself, it is easy to lose sight of the most important things on which to focus. This confusion often ultimately ends up leaving one unsatisfied with his or her musical progress. With this in mind, I would like to offer a method for setting focused and attainable goals that will help lead to success.

First, define exactly what your goal is and write it down, making sure you are as specific as possible. Limit yourself to a certain amount of time by including starting and ending dates for the goal. This will help hold you accountable and keep you focused on the task at hand. When defining what your goal is, also remember that it is important to be realistic while still challenging yourself. For the purpose of this article, let's use this goal as our example: "I will prepare the Arutunian *Trumpet Concerto*, beginning in January, and will perform it on a recital in May."

Second, develop your plan of attack. Once your goal is defined, spell out exactly how you plan to reach this goal, what work must be done in order to achieve it, and how often you need to do the work in order to stay within your time frame. Using our example, a general plan of attack may be something like, "To achieve my goal, I will warm up slowly and effectively every morning. I will practice the Arutunian in sections first and then combine larger chunks of the work when I feel ready. I will continue to attend my weekly private lessons, practice what my trumpet teacher prescribes, and listen to recordings of different professionals playing the Arutunian."

Once you develop your plan of attack, use it to create an organized schedule, or routine. Include dates and lengths of time, whenever possible, to identify when each step needs to be completed. A sample schedule might be: "I will warm up before heading to class at 7:30 A.M. for fifteen minutes. I will complete my hour of practice at 4:00 P.M. on weekdays and at 10:00 A.M. on Saturdays and Sundays. I will attend my trumpet lesson on Tuesdays at 7:00 P.M. and schedule additional help as necessary. Lastly, I will have the Arutunian prepared enough to begin rehearsing with my accompanist no later than four weeks prior to my recital." Consider also any resources

you may be able to use that could help attain the success of your goal. Resources might include meeting with your teacher for additional help, asking a friend for opinions, or doing a warm-up performance for your church.

Next, as you get closer to the date of accomplishment, reflect on your progress. Are you sticking to your plan of attack and the corresponding schedule? What could you do, in addition to the work you're already doing, that would help achieve your goal? Are there additional resources that you haven't already

utilized to help ensure success? Decide what is and is not working well, and make adjustments as necessary.

Finally, celebrate and reward yourself when the goal is completed! Achieving a goal is a lot of work, so go to dinner with your friends, take time off, and pat yourself on the back. You deserve it!

"Decide what is and is not working well, and make adjustments as necessary."

About the author: Becki Ronen Walenz recently completed the MM degree in trumpet performance at the Crane School of Music at the State University of New York at Potsdam, where she studied trumpet with John Ellis. This past fall, she began teaching trumpet at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, and started her DMA degree in trumpet performance at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, studying with Steve Leisring.

